

IRAN: SOVIET LINKS WITH KURDISH GROUPS

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A recent Soviet effort to shore up Khomeini's position among the Kurds of northwest Iran provides further evidence that Moscow's policy is to patiently court the regime in Tehran. Despite Moscow's continuing difficulties with Khomeini, the Ayatollah's undermining of groups opposed to the USSR and creating conditions for the seizure of power by the pro-Soviet Communist Tudeh party are advantageous to Moscow.

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The Soviet Union may be attempting to exploit divisions among Iranian Kurds brought about by the conflict with Iraq. Some Kurdish dissident groups have reportedly backed away from open opposition to the Khomeini regime because of increasing economic hardships brought on by the war. According to some reports, these groups are now willing to accept Soviet aid. The Soviets may hope to develop their ties with Kurdish groups while continuing to seek improved relations with the anti-US regime in Tehran.

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Fedayeen

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recently reported that the Kurdish branch of the leftist Fedayeen-i-Khalq (People's Strugglers) group has split over the confrontation with Tehran, with the majority faction backing the Khomeini regime. This Fedayeen faction reportedly views the Ayatollah as the most effective deterrent to the re-establishment of US influence in Iran.

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In the past, the Kurdish branch of the Fedayeen was the one most violently opposed to the Khomeini regime. The division along pro- and anti-Khomeini lines in that branch seems to parallel the reported split within the other Fedayeen groups throughout Iran that occurred last January.

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Because of the Fedayeen's animosity toward the United States, their turn toward Khomeini was also

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25X1C [redacted] accompanied by a shift toward the USSR, [redacted]
 25X1C [redacted] They reportedly are now willing to solicit
 Moscow's assistance and apparently have dropped their
 demand for an independent Marxist-Leninist line. [redacted]
 25X1A [redacted]

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Kurdish Democratic Party

25X1A Confrontation with Tehran has also been a source
 of friction within the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)
 at least since last April.* Last summer, for example,
 these disagreements led to the resignations of promin-
 ent party members, including KDP Deputy Secretary
 General Qani Blurian. Blurian and others who left
 favored negotiations with Tehran and collaboration
 with the pro-Soviet Tudeh, which publicly supports
 Khomeini. [redacted]

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25X1C The Iraqi invasion seems to have reopened the dis-
 pute within the KDP over dealings with Tehran. [redacted]
 [redacted] in late September a Soviet official
 based in Tehran traveled to Kordestan Province to mediate
 between the Blurian faction and the mainstream of the KDP.
 At about the same time KDP General Secretary Abdol Hassan
 Qasemlu met with Khomeini's representatives to work out
 a truce between the Kurds and the Iranian forces. In
 early October, the KDP apparently also attempted unsuc-
 cessfully to persuade a radical anti-Soviet Komala group
 to adopt a similar position. [redacted]

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Although the Soviets have almost certainly meddled
 in the KDP's affairs before, this is the first suggest-
 ion of possible KDP receptivity to Soviet probes. This
 could encourage Moscow to attempt to restore the position
 of the Blurian faction within the KDP and to strengthen
 support for the anti-US regime in Tehran among the Kurds.
 Official Soviet statements and Tudeh declarations continue
 to call for support of the Khomeini regime and advocate
 peaceful resolution of ethnic conflicts. [redacted]

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Tehran remains suspicious of Soviet involvement
 with dissident Kurds. In early September, two members
 of the pro-Soviet Tudeh party were executed in western

25X1C *The Kurdish Democratic Party headed a short-lived "autonomous
 republic" under Soviet tutelage after World War II. To broaden
 its ethnic base, the party was recently renamed the Democratic
 Party of Kordestan, [redacted] [redacted]

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Iran allegedly for their activities in Kordestan. Despite Tudeh's denials of such involvement, last year the Soviet Ambassador told a senior Iranian official that Tudeh was active among the Kurds. []

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Aid to Kurds?

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[] the Soviets may be providing aid to Kurdish dissidents, but we have no hard evidence to substantiate this. The lack of solid evidence does not mean that Moscow is not materially aiding them. Collection of such evidence is complicated by the area's proximity to the USSR, its porous frontiers, and Moscow's ability to channel aid through third parties. Although the USSR wishes to preserve its options in the event Iran disintegrates and the Kurds gain power, Moscow's goal in Iran for now appears to be to curry favor with the anti-US regime in Tehran and to support those elements in Iran that favor the eventual emergence of a more pro-Soviet Government in Tehran. []

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